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NO. 15

RESIDUE INVESTIGATION

What It Means to You



United States Department of Agriculture

Food Safety and Quality Service

FSQS-15

RESIDUE INVESTIGATION

What It Means to You

If you produce livestock or poultry, you probably use drugs and other chemicals to help prevent and to treat diseases in your herds or flocks.

Therefore, at some time you may face the problem of having livestock or birds retained because of a residue problem.

If you should face that problem—and the possible resulting loss of revenue—you will need to know about the Federal and State agencies concerned with residues—their responsibilities and how they can help you.

Federal and State agencies work together to determine the cause of residue violations and steps that can be taken to prevent further problems. They coordinate information and investigations to avoid duplication of effort.

Agencies involved include: The Food Safety and Quality Service (FSQS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare; the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); State Departments of Agriculture; and the Federal-State Cooperative Extension Service.

FSQS Role

FSQS is responsible for the safety and wholesomeness of our meat and poultry supply. As part of that responsibility, FSQS conducts a National Residue Monitoring Program. This is designed to keep track of the incidences of drug and chemical residues occurring in meat and poultry.

FSQS inspectors check livestock and poultry both before and after slaughter, looking for any abnormalities that can be seen. Since chemicals and drugs seldom cause visible abnormalities, tissues are collected and analyzed as part of the overall residue program.

Role of FDA, EPA, and State

FDA is responsible for the safety and efficacy of drugs and other veterinary preparations that may be used for food animals. This agency sets tolerances for residues of approved drugs and chemicals.

EPA has a similar responsibility for toxic substances such as pesticides.

State Departments of Agriculture enforce State laws that regulate livestock and poultry production and marketing. They—and State Departments of Health—share in responsibilities to protect the public health. All of these agencies and departments work closely together whenever a residue problem exists.

Therefore, if FSQS inspectors discover a residue greater than the established tolerance or guideline, they notify FDA and/or EPA and the State of the animal's or poultry's origin.

These agencies—often assisted by the Federal-State Cooperative Extension Service—investigate to find the cause of the problem and work with the producer to correct it. They also conduct educational programs to aid producers in avoiding future residue violations.

One of the first examples of such formal cooperation was a pilot program initiated in 1974 between USDA, FDA, and the State Departments of Agriculture of Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia to reduce the incidence of residues in livestock and poultry.

More recently, a campaign was initiated in early 1978 to reduce the incidence of above-tolerance sulfa residues in swine. With violative residues for sulfa having ranged from 8 to 16 percent during the prior 4 years, a national cooperative effort to reduce sulfa residue levels was launched by several USDA agencies, FDA, State Extension Services, State Departments of Agriculture, swine producers, animal drug manufacturers, feed manufacturers, swine veterinary practitioners and other concerned groups.

What You Can Do

As a producer, you can do much to eliminate the residue problem at its source. Cleanliness and good production practices are prerequisites. In addition, you should:

- Know and follow prescribed medication dosages;
- Know and follow prescribed withdrawal periods for medicines and medicated feeds;
- Read and follow label directions for use;
- Observe all warning statements;
- Make sure that nonmedicated feeds are not contaminated by medicated feeds—check your own and your feed dealer's practices;
- Remove all evidence of feed from feeders, mixers, and storage bins; thoroughly *clean equipment* when switching from medicated to nonmedicated feeds;
- Keep samples of feeds for analysis in case problems should arise;
- Keep treated animals separate from untreated animals until withdrawal periods are completed;
- Cooperate fully with Federal and State officials and industry organizations in organized campaigns to eliminate residues in livestock and poultry products intended for human food.

More information on the above suggestions or any aspect of the residue monitoring and investigation program may be obtained from your county extension agent or:

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